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BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE COLONEL'S LITTLE GAME."

THE WINNING O'T

BY

"HUMPTY DUMPTY,"

President of the Eastern Amateur Press Association, first Vice-President of the National Amateur Press Association, and Author of upwards of a Thousand Popular Tales and Sketches.

MOTTO:

"None but the brave deserve the fair."

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DEDICATION.

In admiration of the pluck and energy displayed in the publication and management of that splendid journal, "THE YOUTHFUL ENTERPRISE," and in acknowledgment of the pleasure the reading of that brilliant serial, "JOE; OR, STOLEN FROM HOME," afforded me, to

MISS L. LIBBIE ADAMS,

"NETTIE SPARKLE,"

These pages are most cheerfully dedicated.

THE AUTHOR.

BY WAY OF PREFACE.

"The Wooing O't" is all very nice, but like all good things, it gets monotonous after a while, and the "wooers" would like to know where The "Winning O't" comes in. It don't come in as often now-a-days as it used to; but my heroes and heroines are always in dead earnest, and it never takes much "Wooing O't" to come to the "Winning O't."

I worked out the plot of the present story about three years ago into a sketch entitled "Lillie's Hero," which the *Buckeye Boy* purchased, but never published, having lost the MSS. After the demise of that excellent journal, I ventured to re-write it, and in the ambition of my youth, presented it for examination to the Editor of Munro's *Fireside Companion*, Mr. Howard. To my gratification, it was duly accepted. I had $2 00 marked on it as the price, and in accordance therewith, I presented my bill to that effect to Mr. Geo. Munro, a

disagreeable, weazen-faced man, with an air of "pay, old fellow; you can't help yourself; the thing's accepted" But instead of producing the amount of the bill, I was gently (?) shown into the street.

I was too discouraged after that to re-write "Lillie's Hero," but I venture upon my task to-day, with the exception of christening "the old, old story" with a more "winning" title.

So much for the history; and now for the story; I hope it won't prove a hiss-story.

Truly,

"HUMPTY DUMPTY."

HOBOKEN, N. J, July 20, '76.

THE

WINNING O'T!

BY "HUMPTY DUMPTY."

YOU'VE all heard of old Judge Abercrombie; he was a fine old gentleman, of the rich old stock. You know he used to live up along the Hudson, on the Highlands, on one of the most beautiful spots on earth. Well, he lives there still. The old, vine-clad mansion, with its blooming gardens and meads and silent forests encircling it, stands to-day as it stood there fifty years ago.

But, of course, there had been lots of improvements made on the old homestead. Little Sadie Abercrombie who, fifteen years ago, only needed a space for the cradle in the old folks' bedchamber, now had a dormitory of her own, besides a boudoir and a cosy sitting room to chat away the weary afternoon with her friends who happened to call.

At first, these friends were all girls, mostly healthy, romping country girls, but, of late, a gentleman would now and then make his appearance in the little sitting room—in company with the other visitors, of course, because old Mrs. Abercrombie didn't stand any nonsense, you know—and pretty soon the old folks had to make up their mind that Sadie was wanted.

Sadie was eighteen years of age; a tall, queenly, graceful girl, with

great, lustrous, winning eyes and all that sort of things; but what suited most of her admirers best, a handsome annuity in her own name from a traditional East India uncle, besides the best prospects in the case of the death of the old Judge.

Sadie, being the only child, had of course, been spoiled, and was therefore dreadfully self-willed. She couldn't, for the life of her, choose from among the number of butterflies that hovered about her.

There was Lord de Flukey, with his "aw" in "chawming" and similar murders of the Anglo-Saxon, a light haired, one-eye-glassed, middle-parted, three-silk-handkerchieved "admirer;" then there was the Hon. Slotewell Barde, with his hair combed Popocatapetl fashion, his chin neither clean shaven nor bearded, and two fingers of his one hand

ever argumentatorily resting in his other hand; there were lots of others but they weren't Sadie's kind, you know.

If you dont know, I'll tell you why. She'd been reading "Romeo and Juliet," "The Lady of Lyons" and other similar heart-rending gloat-overs for fanciful young maidens; furthermore, she had swallowed Don Quixote fashion, all the old tales of chivalry and romances in existence. And she had made up her mind that she must be won, romance-fashion. Not by a money-bagged English snob going to her father with:

"Aw, I lowe your chawming daughter; how much?"

Or an old sinner like the Hon. Barde with:

"Gentlemen—beg pardon, I mean —my dear sir, I cannot refrain, ah,

in short, it gives me—to be brief, I love your daughter: how much does she get?"

"How much?" indeed! No, my dear sirs, Sadie wasn't to be bought; Sadie wanted a heroic rescue from a horrible fate, or some such thing as that, and then, clasped in a fainting fit in her rescuer's arm, he could give her the lover's first kiss, and the thing would be settled.

Now there was Bob Adams, the banker's son, who lived across the river for the summer. She had often thought how nice it would be if Bob could rescue her some day from drowning. In fact, she went so far one day as to offer to take him out in her pretty little boat, and he readily enough consented. And when they had gone a ways from home, she paddled nearer shore, and before Bob, poor fellow, could realize what

had happened, he found himself floundering in the water. Sadie had tipped the boat! She then resigned herself into crying frantically for help:

"Save me, or I drown," and so forth. But unfortunately, the water happened to be so shallow on that spot that you could lay on bottom without inconvenience to comfortable breathing, and the adventure ended in the disconsolate heroine wading ingloriously ashore, leaving her companion to recover the boat and oars.

Bob Adams was sharp enough to see through the little game, especially as he loved Sadie. For although they say love is blind, give me a lover to detect the tender passion in the object of his admiration.

And Bob Adams went home to read all the tales of chivalry in his

father's library for purposes which will presently become apparent.

In the meanwhile Lord de Flukey had obtained papa's consent to go and woo the lovely Sadie, beating the Hon. Barde's offer by $10,000.00. But the Hon. Barde was not easily discouraged and determined to wage a bitter war with My lord for their mutual idol.

On the following day, a most magnificent one, Sadie and My lord might have been seen wending their way from the Abercrombie mansion into the forest on the west, he all attention and fervor, she refreshingly cool and naughty.

"Aw, Sad—aw, beg pardon—Miss Abercwombie, this is a weally fine day."

"Oh, do you think so?"

"Indeed I do, considewing."

"My lord, do you like cheese."

"Good gwacious, what a question, Miss Abercwombie," exclaimed My lord, "well, I weally don't know.

"Does your father like cheese."

"Weally, now, I don't know. He did have a weakness fow Chestaw I admit."

"That was indeed a weakness—but gracious, whom have we here?"

This latter remark was occasioned by their suddenly coming upon a form which "lay in slumbers on the green" beneath the shade of a grand old oak.

The form started up.

"The Honowable Slotewell Bawde I do declare."

"The same, My lord. Miss Abercrombie; I beg your pardon; I—"

"Pray dont apologize; so this is the manner in which you pass your

mornings," Sadie interrupted him with.

"This is an exception—but it was so deucedly warm; I started out on a little walk, and as the poet has it, 'surrendering freely to the apathy.'"

"Pray don't tax yourself, Mr. Barde; it is so, deucedly warm' you know."

And then the three walked on, Sadie between them, the "Hon." on one side, and My lord on the other.

If the reader imagines that this a chance meeting, he is very much mistaken. Barde, the knowing rascal, had followed them from the house all the way, his senatorial breast heaving with green-eyed-monstered emotion; and then he slipped ahead and composed himself in a sleeping attitude, right in their path.

But I must not give my Senator too much credit, ever as a plotter. Be-

fore this attempt at slumbering listlessly, he had most miserably failed in a similar attempt. As on this occasion, he laid himself in their path, but Sadie noticing him, and guessing his object, had turned aside, and paid no attention whatever to his frantic endeavors to attract their attention by vigorously snoring and huffaing and similar expedients. And he was forced to arouse himself and like the boy in the time-honored poetical injunction, "try again."

This time, Sadie had taken pity on him, and noticed him, much to his satisfaction. But this pity consisted more in a morbid and cruel desire to annoy My lord than in any humane feeling.

"You are looking uncommonly well this morning, Miss Abercrombie," the Senator.

My lord frowned. She abstractedly

"Are you speaking to me My lord?"

"Aw, yes I was," My lord sweetly.

"No, I was," the Senator, indignantly.

"Oh, were you?" she, listlessly, "do you mean to say that I don't look well, as a general thing?" This more spiritedly.

"Why no, Miss; ah, I beg pardon; upon my word now," and the poor Senator was ready to fall upon his knees and crave forgiveness.

"Aw, aw, got you there, Senator," smiled My lord.

But suddenly his smile changed into an expression of extreme horror, while the Senator turned livid and remained rooted to the spot. Sadie, too, was transfixed.

From out of the bushes there sprang half a dozen rough, uncouth,

villainous looking fellows, with black masks drawn over their faces, and armed to the teeth.

One of them pointed a seven-shooter at My lord with the words fiercely yelled out:

"Your money or your life; come now, trot out, or I'll give you a task of some cold lead!"

My lord shook like an aspen leaf.

"Good gwacious, sir; y-yes, wight away; but I say, don't point that thing at me; it might go off;" with an expression of horror.

"So it will, if you don't hurry up."

My lord, trembling in every limb, and his classic face blanched with terror, delivered over his wallet and valuables.

"And now let's see you travel," continued the ruffian, pointing the pistol at his head again.

Lord de Flukey unhesitatingly turned upon his heel and fled, without a thought of his fair companion.

In the meanwhile, another ruffian had compelled our Senator to deliver up also, and sent him flying off in an opposite direction, firing a shot over his head by way of effect.

Sadie was just thinking how nice it would be if My lord or the Senator should turn out to be her rescuer in this strait; but when she saw their cowardice and deliberate fright, she was forced to come to the conclusion that she must be her own rescuer, and being a determined girl, she turned right about face and ran for dear life.

But she had not gone many paces, before one of the ruffians was upon her and caught her in his arms.

"Unhand me, wretch," she screamed, in the height of distress.

"Oho, not so fast, my beauty," chuckled the villain, clasping her tighter.

She struggled bravely, but in vain. The other ruffians, with their spoils in their hands, gathered about her and laughed aloud over the success of their expedition.

"And now, Jim," said one, who appeared to be their leader, "you lead on with the girl. Greg, you help him. We must have her safe at the 'Roost' by noon. The major 'll pay us handsomely for this. Come on."

She tried to cry out, but Jim stuffed a handkerchief in her mouth, and he and Greg secured her safely, and proceeded to drag her off.

But suddenly a vigorous "halt!" rang through the silence of the forest, and the next moment, a tall, manly figure stepped into view.

Sadie threw a glance of unutterable anguish at him, and then one of joy and recognition.

"Bob Adams!" She wanted to cry out, but she couldn't.

It was indeed he. In either hand he held a revolver. In a moment they were cocked and leveled at the villains.

"Release that lady!" he cried.

"What's the matter with you?" inquired Jim, coolly.

"You won't obey me?"

"You'd better go home and tell your mother she wants you," laughed Greg.

"I'll give you just five seconds to unhand that lady," and Bob set his teeth hard.

The leader of the gang frowned heavily; then suddenly drew forth a revolver and fired at the courageous young man.

The shot missed. The next moment there was another report, and with a groan, the leader fell heavily to the ground.

The others now drew their knives and revolvers and charged upon Bob in a body. A score of shots were exchanged, and two more of the ruffians fell. Bob was still unhurt. Then a fourth of the gang lay weltering in his blood, and at renewed shots from Bob, the two others fled into the woods.

Sadie had watched the struggle with bated breath and heart standing still, and now that it was over, her strength gave way; she lost her senses and fell in a dead faint—into Bob's arms.

"Won, by George!" he exclaimed, triumphantly, as he bent over her.

"Yes, that was THE WINNING O'T.

Bob dragged her away from the scene of action to a neighboring brook, where he soon brought her back to consciousness.

The poor fallen ruffians, as soon as the couple was out of sight, arose, and went off arm-in-arm, laughing aloud. Could Sadie have seen them without their masks, she would have recognized them friends of Bob and herself, whom the former had persuaded to enact these parts for him.

The reader can guess the finale. My lord and the Senator often boasted of their gallant defence, but were effectually hushed when, on the wedding day of Bob and Sadie, they were the recipients of the valuables that had been robbed from them "with the compliments of Robert Adams."

And then, mentally cursing their luck, they saw through THE WINNING O'T and left for parts unknown.

THE END.

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